

Federally Recognized Tribes in Washington State



Medicine bag with tie and traditional tobacco



Traditional tobacco pipe and tie

Overview

Historically, tobacco has been an essential element in the ceremonial aspects of many American Indian communities and has taken on sacred roles throughout the populations. Culturally, tobacco was, and is, a sacred plant used for spiritual,

emotional, mental, and physical guidance. Although the creation, beliefs, and uses of tobacco vary from tribe to tribe, overall, tobacco is understood as a very powerful substance that can both protect and harm, depending on how it is used.

Key Accomplishments

- Capacity Building – Tribes have become increasingly involved in tobacco prevention and control since funding by the Washington State Tobacco Program began in 2000.
- Prevention – Native American communities highly value their youth, which means that most tribal programs have focused on preventing tobacco use among youth through Teens Against Tobacco Use (TATU) peer education training, sports events, youth groups, and school and community-based presentations.
- Cessation – Tribal health care providers are being trained in Brief Tobacco Intervention Skills so that they can counsel their patients, and arrange their clinic systems to help their patients who use tobacco to quit.
- Culturally Appropriate Materials and Programs – Tribal program coordinators and the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board are working with the American Lung Association, American Cancer Society, and the Washington Tobacco Prevention and Control Program to adapt or create tobacco prevention materials and programs in ways that respect and reflect tribal culture.
- Raising Community Awareness – Tribes educate community members on the differences between traditional tobacco use and commercial tobacco abuse through participation in pow-wows, annual canoe journeys, community health fairs, and through tribal newspaper articles and posters

Plans and Priorities

- To promote respect for the sacred use of traditional tobacco, while continuing to raise awareness of the dangers of tobacco misuse in tribal communities.
- To promote cessation services, prevent youth initiation, reduce exposure to secondhand smoke, and counter tobacco company advertising on tribal lands.
- To enhance the wellness of American Indian and Alaska Native communities by providing culturally appropriate tobacco education and prevention resources through training, technical support, collaboration, and advocacy with a commitment to excellence.